Your vacation rental revenue does not get better by chance, it gets better by CHANGE.
Small investments of time and money can produce significant returns in the revenue generated by your vacation rental property. Today’s travelers are searching the internet and surfing the web for a rental. Ideally, they would like a place as nice as, or nicer than, what they have at home. So what are these guests looking for? What will make your property stand out among the multitude of online choices and turn lookers into bookers?

From my experience as a vacation property owner and a vacation rental property manager, I believe guests are looking for an up-to-date property with the comforts of home as well as added luxuries. In our business, we have found that nicer looking properties rent first, rent for more money and rent more in the off season.

Remember these guests don’t want to feel like they’ve stepped into a time warp with décor reminiscent of their childhoods. (I recently refurbished a beach condo decked out with outdated décor and country knickknacks proudly displayed on lace doilies. Granted, vacations are supposed to take you away, but this condo whisked me back to my grandmother’s house not a tropical paradise!) The good news is there are easy, affordable changes which will revive your vacation property and recharge your rental revenue.

Change your look, change your revenue with these bright ideas:

**Replace comforters with quilts.**

Switch out dated, difficult to clean comforters with new, machine washable quilts. (Note these are not your granny’s quilts, but rather a vibrant, modern twist on the traditional bedding. Rethink quilts.) This is one of the easiest, most affordable ways to give your property a fresh, new look and jazz up a dull bedroom. Color shows up great in pictures, helps your property stand out from the competition and turns lookers into bookers.

Finish the look by investing in pillow shams, bed skirt (if needed) and complimentary decorative pillows. **Tip:** Old pillows can be used to fill shams and new ones purchased for pillow cases. Layering bed accessories (pillows, pillow shams, sheets, quilts and even folded blankets at the foot of the bed) can add interest and color. In general, avoid solid color bedspreads – print designs seem to age more gracefully. Many quilts are reversible, doubling your decorating options. **Tip:** Forgo expensive matching shams and use a combination of 3 or 4 coordinating solid accent pillows.

Costs range from $30 to $100 from discount stores. A few of my favorite places to shop for nice, affordable quilts are Ross Dress for Less (great prices & usually quilts sold in sets with shams – king sets can be as little as $35!), Stein Mart (large selection with coordinating accent pillows), Marshall’s, HomeGoods and TJMaxx.
Invest in fresh, new, high-quality linens.
Although new, quality linens may not be as apparent in pictures, it won’t take long for guests to discover and appreciate this valuable update. Vacationers want not only the look of luxury, but also the feel of luxury. For this reason, I recommend 100% cotton sheets with 400 thread count or higher. Along with feeling luxurious, they will also last longer. I also suggest white linens which look fresh and are easier to keep clean. (Hotels use white sheets for a reason.) Be sure and discard old worn or stained blankets, mattress pads and pillows, replacing them with new ones. 

**Tip:** Pamper your guests with an extra set of pillows in master bedrooms. Also, four pillows allows for a variety of pillow types, as some guest prefer softer and others firm.

For vacation rentals, linens need to be replaced about every 2 years. For same day turnovers, each bed should have 2 sets of sheets (including sleeper sofas and trundles). **Tip:** Extra sets of linens (i.e. in excess of 2 per bed) should not be accessible to guests or cleaners. Excessive, mismatched towels and linens can be confusing to the cleaners and appear hodge-podge to guests.

Costco and Sam’s Club are excellent stores to purchase affordable, high thread count sheets (approximately $45 - $65 for a king set) and plush towels. Costco’s set even includes an extra set of pillow cases. Quality linens can also be found at HomeGoods, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s and TJMaxx.

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Extra Pillows Add Luxury

Add or replace wall art.

Trade in old, faded, dusty pictures with some new enchanting wall décor; or add focal points to blank, bare walls (If it looks empty, it will feel empty.). Large canvas art can add personality, vivid color and tie in your other furnishings & your property theme. Plus, canvas art does not fade like prints will. Other affordable, durable choices to consider for wall décor are photographs, wood art, metal wall décor and wall plaques. As opposed to covering the walls with many small pieces, select larger pieces. Several complimentary pieces hung together in a grouping can make a real statement. One of the easiest ways to recast a space is hanging a captivating piece or grouping of art.

“Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” – Pablo Picasso
A well placed mirror has the ability to give both the illusion of space and light. Hanging a mirror opposite a window will reflect incoming light and brighten the whole room.

**Tip:** Watch out for these common mistakes: hanging pictures too high (as a rule, hang art at eye level ~ 56”-60” from center of artwork to floor), hanging too small of pictures for the space or scale of furniture, covering every wall with artwork and hanging everything in a straight row around room.

Good selections of inexpensive wall art helps distinguish your property from the rest of the “cookie cutter” condos. Remember guest are looking for a home away from home not a hotel room. Great pieces can be found at Kirkland’s and Old Time Pottery, as well as HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s and TJMaxx.
Add new bright accent pillows and throws.
For minimal cost, colorful pillows and throws can breathe new life in your vacation property’s décor. Refresh bedrooms and jazz up existing family room furniture with vibrant pillows and throws. Not only will they add a splash of color, they will silently signal that this vacation property is cared for.

These accessories can be skillfully used to combine other elements of the room (like furniture, flooring, art...) and energize neutral furnishing - not to mention adding the look and feel of comfort. Layering different sizes, colors, patterns, and textures of pillows can add interest and depth.

**Tip:** Extend the life of your new pillows by treating with Scotchgard.

Once again, Stein Mart, HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s, TJMaxx, Costco and Sam’s Club are excellent stores to find good selections.

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Add a few inexpensive area rugs.
While you may not be ready to invest in redoing your flooring, you can refresh rooms with accent and area rugs for very minimal cost. Use new rugs to make the space pop and prospective guest click “Book Now”.

Rugs can easily add warmth, comfort, interest and color to a room, along with covering older, unappealing flooring. In more open plans, they can be used to define different spaces. Remarkably, you can actually make your walls look better by making your floors stand out. **Tip:** Colored, patterned rugs can be very forgiving to spills.

Costco, Sam’s Club, HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s and TJMaxx will provide many reasonable choices.
Exchange old tube TVs with new Large Flat Screens.

This update clearly stands out in photographs, is a searchable amenity on most sites and implies to potential guests your property is up-to-date. This “luxury” is quickly becoming an expected amenity. If possible, furnish the family room and each bedroom with one. (A DVD player and a DVR are also welcome additions to a vacation property.)

We recommend replacing all old tube TVs positioned on furniture for both aesthetics and safety. These “dinosaurs” speak volumes in property photographs. The instability of these TVs can also lead to injuries and pose a real risk especially to children.

**Tip:** if you purchase a new larger flat screen, swap out the existing family room TV ~ moving it to the master bedroom and in turn the master’s to the guest bedroom (flat screens only).

**Design Tip:** we ordered precut molding online and framed in several flat screens. (Amazingly, framing can be easily attached using industrial strength Velcro.)

Costco and Sam’s Club are excellent places to purchase flat screens. If you shop Sam’s Club online, you can have a TV drop shipped directly to your property. Prices run around $450 for a 42” flat screen TV. 32” ones which are ideal for bedrooms, cost about $200.
De-clutter your property accessories.

“Clutter is the number one enemy to a well-decorated home.” Reports Jessica Padykula, Home & Garden’s Deco-rating Diva. Vacation rentals must strike the right balance between not appearing sterile & empty (guest intentionally are renting a home away from home) or cluttered & overly personal (they want to be able to temporarily make it their own).

Excessive knick knacks appear messy and stifling, not soothing and relaxing. Not to mention the fact that guests need space to leave and store their own things. Overcrowding a room with even nice things can keep a space from appearing polished and fresh. In interior decorating, the adage goes “Less is more.”

Remove silk flowers and plants. They get extremely dusty and cleaners don’t have sufficient time to clean them. Not to mention, they can really date your interior.

Edit counter and furniture top accessories. Tip: One decorator advised putting all your accessories in a box then adding them back one by one, positioning them for maximum impact. Remove items that are not consistent with your overall décor (you don’t want to have your 2nd home become a dumping ground for everyone’s hand-me-down housewares). Along with not having a hodgepodge of old items, don’t leave your valuable “treasures” either. Rentals are not the place to display priceless family heirlooms or valuable works of art.
Add eye catching accessories.
You can quickly change the look of a room by adding some new accessories. Themes can be accentuated, color added and focal points achieved through thoughtful additions; giving your property a unique look and special appeal. Distinctive pieces show up well in property photos and subtly appeal to travelers who long to be taken away from the ordinary.

Inexpensive colorful glass bottles can add dramatic color. A clear glass bowl filled with seashells or sea glass becomes an interesting centerpiece. Colorful ceramic pots can complement hues in the rest of your décor. Baskets and games (e.g. chess) can add both form and function for very little cost. Try accessorizing with books. (Stacked books & area travel books add sophisticated style as well as enjoyment.)

Accessories can be found at Kirkland’s, Old Time Pottery, HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s and TJMaxx. Interesting knick knacks can even be found at thrift stores.
Breathe life into existing furniture and cabinets.

Recover chair seats. Kitchen or dining room chairs can easily be recovered for a quick makeover. Select fabric that coordinates well with the rest of your décor and is durable. For chairs without fabric seats, seat cushions can be tied on to freshen up their look. **Tip:** Extend the life of your new seat covers by treating with Scotchgard. Restore leather seats with a little olive oil.

JoAnn Fabric and Craft Stores offer a vast selection of fabrics. Consider outdoor fabrics or microfibers for durability. While recovering, you may want to add some extra padding. Use staple gun for quick application of fabric.

Update your hardware on furniture, cabinets, doors and baths.

One of the easiest, most affordable ways to revamp your kitchen or bathroom is to change the hardware. New hardware can go a long way in updating your property. Old can suddenly look new. Similarly, furniture can be given a face lift with new, interesting hardware. Home Depot and Lowes have a large supply of choices. The internet is a splendid choice for unique finds of interesting hardware.
Revamp an old piece of furniture by painting it.

Beat up furniture from thrift stores, garage sales, or scratch & dent outlets can be resurrected into a focal point of a room with a can of high-gloss paint. This is an ideal, affordable way to add splashes of color to your home decor.

The above coffee table was purchased for $35 with no glass. A couple cans of paint & stain along with glass transformed it. The shadow box lower tray was filled with nostalgic area post cards and intriguing sea shells.

Fireplace Mantel painted white was a quick remake of the dated, pickled 80’s version.
Replace old outdated curtains and window treatments.
This change can infuse new life into your property. On the other hand, broken, sagging blinds are an eyesore and hint of neglect. If you select solid color window treatments, it will be much easier in the future to add new furniture or accessories.

One affordable option for sliding glass doors is floor length curtain panels with grommets hung on a curtain rod. They are both attractive and functional (without the constant headaches of broken vertical blinds which dangling cords can even pose a strangulation risk for children). Consider purchasing panels with blackout lining which can help save energy, guard against furniture fading and benefit late sleepers.

**Tip:** If you mount the hardware wide, you can stack the curtains completely out of the way, while still framing the sliding door nicely.

Replace shower curtains.
One of the easiest, most cost effective ways to redo a bathroom is to replace shower curtains. Hookless shower curtains are an excellent choice for both form and function. They look smart and slide easily (no clumsy or rusty hooks). The liner snaps off for laundering or replacement.

**Tip:** Hookless shower curtain can be purchased online from Amazon Prime and shipped straight to your property.

Amazon Prime is a good online site to purchase panels to cover sliding glass doors. IKEA also has many different options for panels with eyelets (i.e. grommets). They also may be found at HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s, and TJMaxx. New blinds for other windows can be purchased at Home Depot or Lowes.
Replace lights and ceiling fans.

Update lamps or even simply swap out old lamp shades.
Old, corroded lamps need replacing. If the “bones” of the lamp are in good condition, you may only need to replace the shade. The height of the shade should be roughly 3/4 the height of the base, and the shade’s width should extend past the widest part of the lamp base. Make sure that the new shade extends down far enough to cover all the electrical fittings and the base of the socket.

Tip: Try selecting a lamp shade that repeats the shape of the lamp base. (Note it may make more sense to just replace the whole lamp, depending on the cost of the shade.)

Check Kirkland’s, Old Time Pottery, HomeGoods, Tuesday Morning, Ross Dress for Less, Marshall’s and TJMaxx for affordable lamps.

Replace old, sagging ceiling fans and dated light fixtures.
New light fixtures and ceiling fans can both update the look of your property and help define your style & theme. Guests desire both attractive and adequate lighting.

Home Depot and Lowes have a good selection of affordable ceiling fans and light fixtures. You can also find an enormous selection online. Just keep in mind scale, checking dimensions before purchasing.

Tip: A light fixture should be hung 30-34 inches above the dining table. This same rule holds true for lighting over islands and kitchen tables.
Repaint property for a quick update.

A fresh coat of paint can instantly transform a room. As noted before, colorful interiors appeal to vacationers and photograph well. Added color is likely to translate into added bookings. Keep in mind that high-quality, high-gloss paint lasts longer (but shows imperfections in the wall board). Scuff marks are more easily cleaned off higher gloss paint.

**Tip:** Magic Erasers really are “magic” when it comes to cleaning walls and cabinets.

Not ready to repaint property, then paint an accent wall.
One of the fastest ways to give a room a fresh look at little cost is to paint an accent wall a high-contrast color.

**Tip:** try out a new wall color by painting a poster board and setting it next to different furniture and on different walls to get an idea of what it will look like. Note stores often offer smaller sample cans of paint.

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” — Socrates
Remember......

You don’t have to break the bank to update your property.

Small investments can reap huge returns in increased vacation rental revenue.

Pocket Change             Décor Change        Revenue Change
Teeming Vacation Rentals is a vacation rental property management company that specializes in maximizing rental revenue to property owners through producing teeming vacation rentals. Company founders and owners, Jeff and Gina Paglialonga, work with many of the owners they represent to help Revive their vacation property to Recharge their rental income. Repeatedly they have seen that small investments can yield substantial results. They first started in the management business by managing their own beachfront condo in 2004 and then applied their knowledge to help others manage theirs as well. Currently, they own a condo on both the east and west coast of Florida. Jeff also owns an Allstate Insurance Agency and was a General Contractor for 5 years. Pooling different skill sets and tons of hands on experience, they love teaming together to spruce up properties for owners in their network. Residing in Winter Park, Florida, Jeff and Gina have been married for 28 years and have four children.

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”
Thomas A. Edison